

**September 7 1983**  
**Fiftieth Anniversary,**  
**“The Story Of Our Lives” ,**  
**John And Laura Derksen**

.

**From the Way I heard It And Lived It”.**

—

**A Found And Preserved Writing.**

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“ September 7 1983 Fiftieth Anniversary, “The Story Of Our Lives” , John And Laura Derksen- From the Way I heard It And Lived It”- A Found And Preserved Writing.

“Gladys Pauline Pearce AKA Elizabeth Pauline Culp, A Derksen Descendant Placed For Adoption”

Jeanette Tracy McIntyre  
122 Buffalo Orchard Trail  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
E- mail snoolhu3@yahoo.com

Please Note: In consideration of privacy issues, names of living persons are only indicated by last name for the listing of children. First names and date of births have been redacted. Names of living persons have also been redacted within the main body of the work. Once permissions to use full names is acquired by myself, if such permission is granted by included persons, an updated version will be placed including such names.

**Provenance:**

In late October 2013 I received contact from Rosanne Stanford who had come across two typewritten publications - one for a John Thomas Derksen & Laretta Spotts and the second was for a Redacted [Living Derksen] daughter of John and Laretta, both tucked into some records belonging to her husbands' father, Eldon L. Stanford.

Reading the first publication, Rosanne found the reason for these publications placement in Eldons' files. Eldon was mentioned within as John Derksen served with Eldon in World War II. As Eldon retained possession of these two documents, published as part of John Derksens September 07 1983, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary occasion, it is felt that a lifelong friendship was enjoyed by John Derksen and Eldon Stanford as is indicated within the publication and that Eldon himself was at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event.

As Rosannes family trees do not include the Derksen lines, Rosanne sought out descendants of John Derksen in order that she might preserve and place both documents to prevent permanent loss of the data contained within.

Many thanks to Rosanne Stanford for her efforts in locating descendants and the subsequent successful placing of these documents with Jeanette Tracy McIntyre, Granddaughter of Gladys Pauline Pearce, (adoptive name), who was originally born Elizabeth Pauline Culp, daughter of Nettie M. Derksen (married name Culp) and unbeknownst sister of John Thomas Derksen.

**Note:**

These works titled:

“ September 7 1983 Fiftieth Anniversary, “The Story Of Our Lives” , John And Laura Derksen- From the Way I heard It And Lived It”- A Found And Preserved Writing.

And:

Redacted [Living Derksen] “[...] Rememberances On The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Of Her Beloved Parents, John And Laura Derksen” - A Found And Preserved Writing.

will be published separately, as well as together– to include Gladys Pauline Pearce AKA Elizabeth Pauline Culps” data and documents, titled :

“Gladys Pauline Pearce AKA Elizabeth Pauline Culp, A Derksen Descendant Placed For Adoption”.



SEPTEMBER 7, 1933

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES"

JOHN AND LAURA DERKSEN



SEPT. 7, 1933

FROM THE WAY I HEARD IT AND LIVED IT.

The story begins in Holland, Europe. The year is not known, but the young Dutch girl married a young man by the last name of Ewoldt. She became pregnant by some two months when her husband, the equivalent of a stage coach driver, was killed in a wreck.

Before the baby was born she married a man by the name of Derksen. When the baby was born, it was given the name of John Derksen.

This John Derksen married a young Dutch girl by the maiden name of Gerhada Lankheet Lambert, born April 15, 1860. Shortly after their marriage they came on a ship to America in the 1870's. Their first place to reside was Cincinnati, Ohio, where their first born was a boy on Dec. 11th. 1883, named John Lambert Derksen. Perhaps I should not say their first born, because there was a daughter who died at the age of 18, possibly about 1890, her name was Mary.

After leaving Cincinnati Ohio in a covered wagon that took three months, they came into Tipton, Iowa. There, the Father, John Derksen and a brother Herman, who had come to America since, started a nursery which they sold after a couple of years.

At this time the brothers and John's family migrated to Ida Grove, Iowa.

Herman started a bakery which in the early 1900's became the Coon's Brothers Bakery. Bill and Al Coon's as is remembered. This being after the death of Herman Derksen.

John Derksen decided to break away from an old Holland custom that the "Derksen's" for generations had always been "Bakers" in Holland. Instead, he homesteaded a small 83 acre farm, 6 miles northeast of Ida Grove on what was called the "old River Road." This Farm was located in Ida County, Logan Township.

Three more daughters were born before John's wife died December 31, 1895 . At this time or shortly after, the Father left the Farm in the hands of his children to operate and went to Danbury, Ia., where he was in the "Bakery" business until his death in 1919.

Let us now review the Characters living at this time: His son John Lambert Derksen, eldest of 5 children, and his wife Anna Margaret McDermott Derksen, who were married on Jan. 6, 1906. Nettie Derksen eldest daughter - born Feb 25 1889. Zeinnie Derksen next younger daughter - born fall of 1892.



- D. Annie Derksen youngest living daughter - born about 1895. Mary Derksen, deceased before this stories starting date of 6-14-1913. She died at age 18 about 1890.

At 5 A.M. on the morning of June 14th 1913, a son was born to Nettie Derksen, then 23 years of age, and unmarried. There was no Doctor present, so her younger sister Ziennie was the midwife. The baby weighed only 2½ lbs. and could be set on a small pillow in one of the 100 count cigar boxes of that time.

Not being married, the baby was given to John L. Derksen and his wife Anna Margaret. She stayed in Bed for 10 days with the baby to make believe she had it, in case neighbors came around. Nettie stayed out of sight of neighbors, as she had for some months before. Evidently some few persons either knew or suspicioned the true circumstances. And in a small farm community and the town of Ida Grove, Iowa of 2000 population, the majority, except for the child supposedly born on June 14th 1913, knew the story. This child was supposed to have been baptized a Catholic with the Christian

- E. — name of John Thomas Derksen, Jr.

- F. — Why the "Thomas" or else, why the "Jr.", no one knows. The one thing that is known, is the fact that no baptismal records can be found in Ida Grove or other surrounding towns Church records. It is noted, though, that early in life, the John Thomas Derksen remembers his supposed parents telling him that his God-parents were Mr. & Mrs. Tom McDermott, whom was a brother of Anna Margaret. They lived on Moore-head Ave. in Ida Grove during the 1920's. Perhaps this was the reason for the middle name of "Thomas". There is no birth certificate in Iowa record either.



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g. — When the child was 6 months old, John & Anna took him to South Dakota, where they bought a farm of prairie land, and built a house & buildings. This farm was in Bruell County with the towns of Kimball, Paukawana and Chamberlain close. They supposedly sold this farm after 1½ year there, going back to the old Ida Grove 83 acre homestead. This would make the child only 2 years of age and yet he can remember having a path worn around the outside of the house where he rode a "broomstick" horse for hours during the days. This reflects a very early memory or the alternative, that he was over 2 years old.

He also remembers that Anna Margaret, whom he called "Mother" throughout her life, had a bad scare by Indians in South Dakota that left her in a bad minded condition until her death in 1940. An example of this condition was the fact that when she would see a team & wagon or a buggy coming down their driveway from the road, she would draw the shades, lock the doors and tell the child to not make a sound. Whomever, could knock on the door for 15 minutes and finally leave.

From this point the child shall refer to John & Anna as Dad & Mom. Dad & Mom were good teachers of the alphabet, words, neatness, etiquette, respect to elders, the Golden Rule, and to Church every Sunday to know about Jesus Christ and God. He could recite the 10 commandments before starting to school or Catechism. He thanks God for this teaching in early childhood.



He started to school in September 1919. The little country school was on 1 acre of the 83 acre homestead. Four blocks by lane & road or 2 blocks cutting across a field up hill from the house. Between Sept. & Jan. of 1920, he completed the primer, which is the equivalent of kindergarten of later years. There were no sand boxes or rugs taken along for naps, but rather more like 1st. grade in later years of public school. Also finishing the 2nd time or review of the primer, before Christmas vacation. The teacher told his Dad to get him the 1st grade books to start in after Christmas vacation.

This his Dad did and by the end of May the son had completed the 1st. grade plus the review and was promoted to 2nd grade for Sept. term 1920, when he would be 7 years old. His 2nd grade was completed by Christmas and in May 1921, had finished 3rd. grade and promoted to 4th grade for Sept. of 1921 at 8 years of age.

In March of 1922 his Dad & Mom moved into Ida Grove. Dad took him up to the principal Mr. C.W. Sankey, to enroll him for the rest of the term thru May. Mr. Sankey looked over the report card and questioned the boy on what they were studying in the 4th grade. He turned to the Dad and said the boy can go in with the 5th graders to finish the term, because they were in the same subjects as the 4th graders were in the country school. The Dad said "No", because he was going through school too fast and would be finished with 5th grade at age 8. So, he went into 4th to finish the term.



I. — At 9 years he took his 1st. of 3 paper routes. They were the Sioux City Journal, the Sioux City Tribune, and the Des Moines Register.

When 13 years old he delivered milk for the "Fords" dairy before school and in the evening, along with the last paper route. Also for a couple of these years had a job of cleaning the Law offices twice a week for Lawyer Burt Johnson. In these years they used spittoons!!

The years were very lean for his Dad & Mom during the last half of the 1920's. This prompted the boy to even stay out of school for 2 years to make whatever small amount possible at that time. He worked at numerous jobs, such as shocking oats & barley, cutting wood, 7 lawns to mow once a week for \$25.00 to \$35.00 per summer for some of the well to do families in Ida Grove, such as Carl Dalquist, the Sherriff, Mr. Billy Anderson, the Buick car dealer etc., also selling white cloverine salve, Bostonian shoes & shirts and other small jobs. He remembers a Mr. John McIntosh an auctioneer was one of his best shirt customers, buying all silk shirts 6 at a time, twice a year. Thru age 14 he rode a bicycle to the other towns such as Arthur, Odebolt, Galva, Holstein, & Battle Creek on gravel roads to sell these products.

R. — The last year of schooling, 10th grade, was made possible because of Mr. Glenn O. Wallace & his wife, Margaret along with "Bill" O'Brien who was the pool hall owner in Ida Grove. Glenn O., known as "Papa Dutch" ran the grocery delivery truck for 21 businesses in town. There was a delivery in the A.M. & in the P.M..



C.W. Sankey was still the principal of the school and made it possible for him to come to class at 10:30 a.m., after the 1st delivery & leave at 3:30p.m. for the p.m. delivery. He lived with the Wallaces that year and for spending money, he had metal runners made to put on each side of the long model "T" delivery truck which had 3 doors on either side. He sold advertising at \$2.00 per month to the stores and could slide their signs into, two on each door was 12 signs at \$24.00 per. month. "Papa Dutch" sold his business that summer to the Art Burgoyne Family and they took John on for three months until they learned the town and the peoples names for each household.

John drew a map on a 3ft. X 3ft. piece of white cardboard, with each house on each block of each street and numbered them with a corresponding number giving the family's name on a separate list. There were 505 houses and he knew names for all but 3 of the places. Yes, he even knew the dogs names, if they had one.

This takes him to about New Years 1930, when everything was economically bad. He had lost the \$10.00 his folks had deposited some years before, in the closing of the Liptons Trust & Savings Bank in 1929, and the Burgoynes had enough help in their own family to run the delivery business. That meant the end of schooling again and for good.

As it is remembered, the next 15 months until the spring of 1931 was odds & ends of jobs & selling. In the spring of 1931 he had an idea and tried it.



He started out from the East street of Ida Grove, north & south through Burns st. which is between the old Dr. Brook Hart, (later) Dr. Hempill office and the Baxter Hotel, with a tablet and pencil, he told each place he would haul their rubbish and garbage for \$1.50 per month, once a week. When he finished at Burns street he had 150 customers. His Dad thought he had gone beserk - he had no way of hauling it 1 mile to the dump.

This, of course, did not deter the boys thinking process, when he knew there was already \$225.00 per month waiting for him in only  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the town and in those tough times. So he went to 3 rather old by now brothers, Ed and Bill and Zack Mercer, that only lived 2 blocks from him. He knew they had 2-5th wheel spring wagons that they had not used for 10 years since they used to deliver groceries with, before "Papa Dutch" came along with a Model "T" truck and took the business.

They sold him 1 for \$10.00, \$5.00 after the first month, and \$5.00 after the 2nd month. Now all he needed was a horse. He rode a bicycle out to Jake Conrady's, 3 miles east of Ida Grove on Old Gravel Road number 35. Jake made him a deal for \$3.00 per week for an old horse that was too old to work in the fields anymore. Yes, he furnished the bridle and harness also. For some weeks he would ride the bicycle out and the horse back and vice-versa 2 days later. He swears the horse was not a single footer, which could have been verified by the aches and sore spots. Sometimes he only led it back.



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He finally built the route to 250 customers, which was all he could take care of per week. After about 6 weeks he got to keep the horse in a neighbors barn, across the alley from home, who had no animals. For this he had to keep the barn clean. Jake still only charged him the \$3.00 per week, but he had to buy the hay, oats & corn.

This was still a good deal, as ear corn was 8 or 10 cents a bushel, oats about 15 or 20 cents and hay 50 cents per bale. He and a neighbor friend a year younger walked  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles, half way to Battle Creek, Iowa, every Saturday and most of Sunday to cut wood to trade for 2 Model "T" Fords. The friends name was Clarence "Mickey" McShane. They cut 44 loads of wood, half for the farmer and 11 loads M. — each to Baxter's Garage for the 2 Model "T's".

They didn't need drivers license's in those days. I must insert this little comment in to keep the reader awake. An old couple, probably in their late 70's a Mr. & Mrs. Valentine Shearer, lived across the street from John and next door to "Mickey's". The day "Mickey came driving his old 1922 Model "T" touring car home, sliding the two back wheels to a dusty stop, Mr. Shearer said to John, "boy that car won't last that kid long, he'll be driving it around without any gas or oil before long".

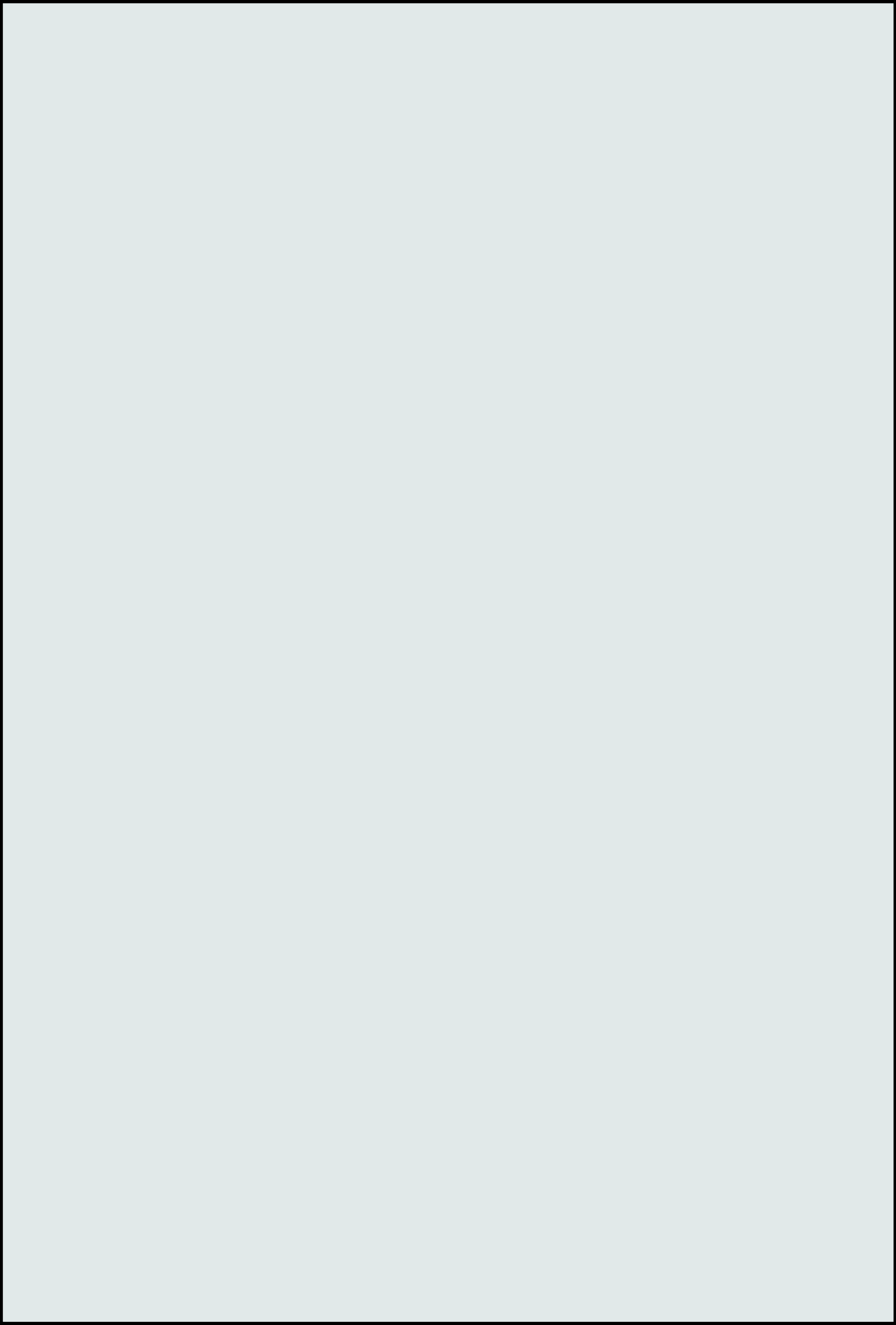
It was partially true, Mickey wasn't too mechanical minded. One cold morning it wouldn't start. Mickey had heard if you block in front of the wheel jack one wheel up, put it in gear you could crank it. He tried this, but couldn't budge the crank. He had jacked up a front wheel. John had taken a 1923 roadster that had a small box instead of the original turtle in back. What would be termed a pick-up later.



This he used for the rubbish route now, instead of the horse and wagon. The first week he used it, he was told by a drayman of over 20 years in Ida Grove, that he would have him stopped because he didn't have a dray license. The drayman was Joel Tubbs. He had always had a large dray wagon and a team of horses. He hauled the mail from the trains to the post office, coal from lumber yards to the peoples houses, as well as rubbish and garbage. He had lost a lot of customers to John. John knew the Mayor, the City Manager, a Mr. Jefferies and all the Councilmen. He talked with them and they said the license was \$30.00 per year and to tell Mr. Tubbs to come up with him to get his, because he had never had one, so his would be \$600.00 to bring him up to date. He told Joel this so Joel decided there was no use to get a license.

We shall go now to the early spring of 1932. Being 18 years old and knowing there was probably better things to try for a choice of future employment, he accepted the foregoing deal. A man by the name of Jack Waggner, age about 50, who during his life had done many things, asked him to furnish his Model "T" pickup to drive him a couple weeks in his business. His business was spraying chicken and hog houses, and board fences with a creosote product. John thought this would be good and a chance to drive the car more miles than usual. He still worked the dray route on weekends. The creosote product was a dripping from coal & coke at artificial gas plants. It really did the job of killing mites, disinfecting and preserving wood. At that time he got it free from plants in Cherokee, Storm Lake and Carroll, Iowa.





John knew by the 3rd week that Jack did not do as good of a job as it should have been on a chicken house. But the last straw was when slowing up to turn into a farm place, Jack said "don't go in there, I sprayed it last year and I've got 3 cards from him to come back and do it over". The next place, less than a quarter mile, he said, "turn in there". John thought this was pretty close to where the guy is mad at you. But Jack contended that the other neighbor would never mention how he had got taken. Sure enough he did the job for the 2nd one.

John bought a spray pump, got material and did this work up until about 1939, with well satisfied customers in 8 mid-west states.

There are so many things that are woven into the 10 to 20 year age, that never having kept a diary, it is rather rough to not overlap one sequence into and beyond another. So we will go back, at age 5 he had the flu that killed many at this time during World War 1.

At the age of 7 he received his 1st Holy Communion.

From his 12th birthday to his 20th he was an Altar Boy in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, with Father P.M. Costello being the Pastor. In 1925 he was confirmed at the same church, but does not remember the Bishops name from Sioux City.

He had his left arm dislocated and broken at age 13, by jumping out of a tree to get a bicycle tire that had caught on an outer limb.

At about 14 years of age he operated a D X gas station alone for 2 months while his Dad was laid up with piorrea in his teeth.



He missed 6 weeks of school at about 13 years old with his Dad having the mumps and with him getting them the day after his Dad got over them. Also at 14 or 15 had chicken pox. In those days the home was quarantened for both of the above.

Back at age 9, his 2nd year in town school, his cousin Cecil McDermott, the son of his God Father, told him something he remembered from then on. Cecil made him promise he would never tell his folks. He promised and never said a word until after the death of his "Mom" Anna Margaret. This is what he was told. "The folks you live with are not your real parents. Your real mother is the person you know as your Aunt Nettie. Also you were born in 1911 not 1913." He had another adult, a Mr. Darrell Forbes tell him the same thing at about age 12. Also, said his father was a Fred Long who came to Iowa for picking corn every year. He was from Missouri, or some where down south.

Now, as intended, he comes to the greatest happenings of his Life.

It was a hot summer day in 1929. Kids were playing in groups in his neighborhood. He was in his front yard riding his bicycle. He had just repaired the broken chain.

He never took much time for playing games with many kids, he usually had papers to deliver or other kids bikes to fix. He would trade fixing for spare parts, and at one time had 3 complete bikes for himself, another reason was because he was always the smallest one in his class in school and having been raised as an only child was very shy, especially if there were girls involved.



Your guess is as good as mine, was it fate? Was it Luck? Or, was it just meant to be? His guess was love!! What happened, changed the lives of not only 2 persons, but literally created the lives that will probably create future generations even until the days of Armageddon. He decided to ride his bike over where some 8 or 10 kids from 10 to 15 years old were playing "King of the hill". It was only across the street at the corner lot, known at the Rohwer House, and the hill was the ditch between the road and the parking of the corner house. It was less than a quarter of a block. He stopped on the road, watched the excitement they were making. Then some of them he knew said "Do you want to play, and do you know Laurretta, they just moved here?". Yes, at that moment he decided to play "king of the hill" because he didn't know Laurretta, but something told him he wanted to.

After probably one half hour "king of the hill" was abandoned to sit and rest. He had become acquainted with Laurretta by this time and mustered the courage to ask her if she wanted to ride his bicycle. She did. She rode it around until the other kids started to leave to go to their dinners. She stopped, he took the bike and said "I'll see you around", she smiled and said "ok".

The rest is not history, rather it was our history's beginning. He did not know that her age was 12 years at that first meeting, but that did not seem to make any difference in John's decision to see her often, after he did know.



He always considered his birthday as June 14, 1913 so he was only 16 and the height and weight of most 14 year olds. Therefore age never entered his mind. The next four years they were together on every occassion.

On the morning of September 7th 1933 they were married. In the interest of family tree history they will now list what Laretta Mae Spotts can relate from the past history of her folks.

Her Father; Samuel C. Spotts, Sr. born in Harrisburg, PA. on Nov. 1 1876 to Mr. & Mrs. John F. Spotts. They moved to Ida County, Iowa 1 year later, residing in Battle Creek, Iowa. He was married to Claudia B. Neal on June 24, 1908. Claudia B. Neal was the daughter of Augusta F. and Mary E. Neal born at springfield, South Dakota on October 16, 1887. Her parents came to Charter Oak, Crawford County, Iowa when she was a small girl. Here she attained young womanhood and her schooling until her marriage, to Mr. Spotts of Battle Creek, Iowa. Seven daughters and Four sons blessed this marriage, although 1 boy and 1 girl died in infancy. From eldest to youngest of the living children are: Ralph Spotts - Melvin Spotts - Ethel - Samuel C. Jr. - Ellen - Laretta - Ruth - Dorothy - and Barbara. It should be noted here that Laretta's grand mother, Mary E. Neal's maiden name was Mullineux. No record known of her french origin.

We shall now go back to the lives of John and Laretta Derksen. After the marriage ceremony John left for Storden and WestBrook Minnesota for 2 weeks. To open new territory and get a house so they could be there in his business of spraying until the cold season set in.

Business was exceptionally good and he went back and picked Laretta up and lived in Storden until Nov. 1933. They then went back to Ida Grove, Iowa for the winter.

They will now cover the next 50 years from Sept. 7, 1933 by listing the births of all their children - places he worked - places they lived, etc. After this is finished, many individual incidents will be told that can be related back to the beginning of this complete autobiography. Yes, you had just as well know now, that the baby - the boy, the son - supposedly born June 14, 1913 - or referred to as He, was me, John Thomas Derksen, Jr. .

#### OUR CHILDREN:

PHILLIS JEAN - Born much premature in 1934, died at age 2mo.

Living Derksen  - Born  1935.

PATRICIA ANN - Born May 31, 1936

Living Derksen  - Born  1938

JOHN THOMAS JR. II - Born August 5, 1939

JAMES FRANKLIN - Born August 6, 1940

GARY LEE - Born May 21, 1942

LARRY DEAN - Born February 22, 1944

EDWARD EMMETT - Born October 26, 1947 - died at age of 3mo.

Living Derksen  - Born  1949

Living Derksen  - Born  1953



## THE JOBS:

- O. — Spraying chicken houses, hog houses and board fences for National Poultry Products Co. (A.B.Wymore - Owner, Kansas City, Missouri.)
- Q. — Started "Excell Poultry Products Co." of Ida Grove and later - Holstein, Iowa.
- Hopkins Dairy - between Arthur & Ida Grove Iowa. Earl & James Hupken owners.
- R. — Manager of " Consumers Wholesale Grocery Store" Holstein, Ia.
- S. — 2nd Class Yeoman Specialist 1st class, was teletype-operator in Navy. Dec3, 1943 to Nov5, 1945
- T. — Council Oak Store Mgr. of fruit & produce dept. Holstein, Ia.
- U. — Stanfords Plumbing & Heating - Cherokee, Iowa
- ↑  
Rutherford Appliance - Cherokee, Iowa
- Bushlows International Harvester & Frigidaire Appls.  
Cherokee, Iowa
- John's Service Center - Cherokee, Iowa. Our 30th anniversary on day of ribbon cutting for Johns Service Center.
- Davies Appliance - Redwood City, California.
- Pacific Coast Mobile Home Sales Inc. - Milpitas, San Jose & Oroville, California.
- U. — ✓ York Aero Inc. - Thomasville, Pa. During a 4 month vacation Nov. 1982 to March 1983.

## PLACES THEY LIVED:

Storden, Minnesota

Four months with John's Dad & Mom. Phillis born & died here.  
Ida Grove, Iowa.

Apt. on Washington Ave. (Mr. & Mrs. Christensen's) Ida Grove

Apt. over the liquor store - Ida Grove (  born here)

Apt. in Arthur, Iowa. (Hady Marth's)



1/2 of the Stapleton house with Johns Dad and Mom having the other half. Patricia Ann born here and John's Mom died here.

The Rohwer house. Where John & Laurretta met, playing "king of the hill" also [ ] was born here.

Apt. in the Henry Stamp house - John Jr. II was born at this time. Henry was the Marshall at Ida Grove.

House north of Country school - James F. born at this time, while working for Hopkins Dairy.

House 3½ mi. east of Ida Grove - Gary Lee born at this time, also at Hopkins Dairy.

Hermeche house - Holstein, Iowa

Bleasdell house - Holstein, Iowa

Buckman house - Holstein, Iowa, Larry Dean born here, also Edward Emmett born & died.

Cubby farm house - 7 mi. NW of Holstein, Iowa.

Bought house only - on Bryce Vollmar farm. 7 mi. N of Holstein. [ ] born while here - Cherokee hospital.

Moved house on new basement Aug. 5 & 6th, 1950 at 284 Saratoga Ave., Cherokee, Iowa. [ ] born in Cherokee hospital 1953.

787 Elm St. San Carlos, Calif. ½ of house with Jim & Pat Hanson for 3 months. then rented - -

911 Valota Rd. Redwood City, for 2 years before selling 284 Saratoga Ave. in Cherokee, Iowa, and buying .....

21 & 23 Arrowhead Lane, a duplex in Menlo Park Calif.

8 years later bought a mobile home - 1220 Tasman Dr. #563 in Adobe Wells Mobile Home Park in Sunnyvale, CA. Shortly afterwards sold the duplex.

After 15 months and Gary was now in the mobile home business, we sold #563 in Adobe Wells and bought a 24X60 mobile home 8 mi. south of San Jose. It was no.1 in Magic Sands Mobile Home Park at 165 Blossom Hill Rd. San Jose, 95123 zip code.



This is when I, John, retired from the appliance business and got my Calif. Mobile Home Sales License, and began working 3 days per week for Gary. In 1980 we sold no.1 in Magic Sands and bought a new mobile home in Olive Hill mobile home park in Oroville, CA. Gary had opened a new office here in April 1980. This is 200 miles north of the Bay Area at the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mt. Range. It is a retirement community in the old gold mine country and away from the hum drum, noise, traffic and smog of big city life. We have the largest earth filled dam in the world with a beautiful 168 mile perimeter lake with 2 marinas. Gary, [ ] [ ] and Mom and I bought an 8x24 pleasure boat with 120hp inboard motor. We do lots of fishing and picnicing with it. We keep it at the Marina.

We could very well end this resume of our lives on the last paragraph, but I would feel remiss, if I did not tell you of incidents relating to different phases of our lives. I will go back to the beginning of these writings and mark with a colored pencil, letters of the alphabet that will correspond to the same letters on the incidents I am relating to. This will allow you to visualize more closely the age, time job etc. when they took place.

For all intents and purposes we shall end the body of  
 ✓. — this drama here, by saying that Laretta dropped the "Etta" from her name when we came to California and added an "A". Her friends all know her as "Laura". We are both well and happy. We have an abundance of good friends, a beautiful clubhouse, card room, pool hall, swimming pool & shuffle board court.

And if we desire we go boating and fishing whenever we want. We go to Church every week. Who could ask for more, starting out at 15½ and 20 - after 50 years? Yes, we truly have had everything that money can't buy. We love you each & everyone and may God bless you.

*John T. Durbaker*



At this writing of September 7th 1983, I will try to bring you up to the present on the demise of those mentioned in this record of the Derksen Family:  
Also relatives.

NAME			DIED	WHERE BURIED
John's Grandpa	-	John Derksen	1919	Sacred Heart Ida Grove, Iowa
Laura's Grandma	-	Mary E. Neal	1930(abt)	Battle Crk., Iowa
John & Laura's 1st. child	-	Phyllis Jean Derksen	1934	Battle Crk., Iowa under name Smith tombstone.
John & Laura's 9th child	-	Edward Emmett Derksen	1947	Holstein, Iowa
John's Mom	-	Anna Margaret Derksen	1940	Sacred Heart Ida Grove, Iowa
John's Dad	-	John Lambert Derksen	5-31-51	Sacred Heart Ida Grove, Iowa
Laura's Dad	-	Samuel C. Spotts Sr.	11-3-57	Ida Grove, Iowa
John's Aunt	-	Annie Derksen - Mrs. Geo. Redenius	?	Ida Grove, Iowa
Laura's Mom	-	Claudia Neal Spotts	3-27-62	Ida Grove, Iowa
Nettie's husband	-	Roley Culp	1960's	Bonner Springs. Kansas
Laura's Brother	-	Samuel C. Spotts Jr.	?	Ida Grove, Iowa
Laura's Sister	-	Ethel Spotts	?	Ida Grove, Iowa
Laura's Brother	-	Melvin Spotts	?	Ida Grove, Iowa
John's step-brother	-	Chester Culp	1970's	Bonner Springs Kansas

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John's step-sister	-	Mrs. Mildred Zimmerman	1982	Bonner Springs Kansas
Laura's sis. Dorothy husband	-	Larry Schissel	1970's	Omaha, Nebraska
John's Grandma	-	Gerhada Lankeet Derksen	12-31-1895	Sacred Heart Ida Grove, Iowa
John's Aunt	-	Ziennie Walsh	1979	Omaha, Neb.
John's Real Mother	-	Nettie Culp	1979	Bonner Springs Kansas



" INCIDENTS "

A. I had a 2 page letter written in "Dutch", that had been written aboard ship by this John Derksen. I believe it was dated 1776, but cannot be sure. It was evidently lost in the last flood in Cherokee.

B. — I cannot be sure how long they were married before coming to America. The daughter could have been born in Holland perhaps about 1872, and died at Ida Grove in 1890. I know she died at 18 years of age and believe it was of appendicitis.

C. — I can very vividly remember my grand-father leaving the farm and going to Danbury, Iowa to operate his own bakery. I think you can still see a picture of me sitting in my dads old style cadillac, I believe, with the steering wheel on the right hand side and the gear shift and hand brake outside the car on the right hand side. One of our albums from my folks era was ruined in the flood. This picture may have been with it. It was taken in front of the bakery.

Annie went along with her father to Danbury to live and help in the bakery. After the death of her father she ran the bakery and later married George Redenius when he came home after World War I. They had 5 children.

D. — About age - It was in 1978, while  was an airline stewardess, that Laura and her and myself planned to take a trip to London, England in January and in April for Laura and I to go to Rome and Florence, Italy.



. Laura and [ ] had no trouble getting their passports. They both had birth certificates, I didn't. The way I got a passport was as follows. I telephoned my Aunt Zennie in Omaha, Neb. and asked her 1 question, "Do you know my birthdate?". Without hesitation she said, "I sure do, Johnny, it is April 14th 1911". I asked her to go to a lawyer and send me a notarized statement to this fact. She did this at her age of 84. She died at 87. I then called my Aunt Nettie, my real mother, and asked her the same question. I got exactly the same answer immediately. She was 87 at the time. She also sent me a notarized statement. She died at 89½. My drivers license and IRA account are 4-14-11 but social security still shows 6-14-13.

That is how I got my passport at the federal building at San Francisco, also shows 4-14-11.

F. — The reason for the Jr. might have been because my Granddad's name was John Derksen, and I never heard of a middle name.

J. — I shall relate the scare (Mom or Anna Margaret) had by Indians in So. Dakota. It was told that grandpa Derksen got quite sick in Iowa and Dad went back for 3 weeks, leaving Mom and I alone on the prairie farm. To picture the surroundings, it was 1½ miles to the closest neighbors, about 20 rounds wide of plowing circled the house & buildings, for insurance against prairie fires. Prairie fires were many in So. Dakota in those years, usually caused because the steam train engines would spill hot coals out.



One of these days, while Dad was in Iowa, a spring wagon with an Indian man, his squaw, 3 children and 2 dogs, drove into the farm yard. We had a large dog, named "Auggie". So big that when let in the kitchen would raise the table if he tried to walk under it. Mom let Auggie in and hooked the screen door. The Indian man came upon the porch and asked Mom if he could have some chickens. She told him we only had 6 old hens for our eggs. Then he asked if her husband was home. She said he was probably out in the barn. He told her he didn't think there was any man around, and he would just take some chickens anyway. He started towards the chicken house, so Mom opened the screen door and said "Auggie, get him". When Auggie came out the door, the Indians 2 dogs took off. Auggie caught the Indian man, had him down and had him bleeding from the arms and head. The Indian woman begged and screamed, the kids were bawling so Mom called Auggie off. The Indian man practically crawled to and up into the wagon and took off. This experience she never got over.

Another thing the boy was always told, was that Mom & Dad let him drink coffee at 2 years old. Also with as much sugar as he wanted. He liked 3 spoons per cup. He was told in later years that he would sometimes take his coffee and pour it in one of the sewing machine drawers. When asked who did it he would always say, "Auggie did it". He remembers Auggie, but not the Indian episode, or the sewing machine incidents.



From the most logical reasoning on the age problem would be that he may have been about 2 years old at the time of the Indian and the coffee in the drawer happenings, but if his folks lived in So. Dakota  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years instead of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  he would have remembered Auggie and the aforementioned "broom stick" horse incidents at age 4, not 2. Also he wouldn't be pouring coffee in a drawer at 4 yrs. old, because he knows he was a very neat & clean kid. The proof of this would be to find out from So. Dakota if his folks came there in 1912 or 1914. I haven't tried.

H. — His early pre-school and thru schooling are pretty well taken care of on the main writing. He may give a couple incidents from 9th and 10th grade. In algebra class with Miss Block the teacher, he got 100% on every days work and on the 1st 5 six weeks tests. On the last six week test, Miss Block read off about 5 names out of a class of 35 that had daily averages for the 6 weeks of 90% or more, and they wouldn't have to take the test. These 5 were supposed to study some other book. A girl by the name of Stella Flynn, daughter of a photographer in town, kept tapping him on the shoulder to turn around and help her on the test. It was only a matter of 10 minutes and he was sitting sideways in his seat, feet in isle and practically doing her work on the test. About this position is when Miss Block noticed and told him to turn around in his seat. He did exactly that, stood up turned 360 degrees and sat down. The class thought it was funny, but Miss Block didn't. She said "For that I will ruin your perfect grade. He got a 99% on the last 6 week report card.



One more - On a 1 semester course in English Literature, which he didn't like anyway, a new young teacher gave him a (red) 74% failing grade, 75% would have been (in black) passing, and 1 credit. He showed Mr. Sankey, the principal. Mr. Sankey went to the room and during class to ask her how she came up with a 74%. She said it was from the averages of everyday papers and tests. Mr. Sankey told her he didn't think our school could afford to hire a teacher that should be getting much more, if she was so good as to fail a person a high school credit by 1%. Needless to say it became a 75%.

To make this an honest, truthful report he has to say he bought 5 & 6 candy bars a day when he got the Sioux City Journal route. After about 6 or 8 months they contacted his bondsman, Mr. Bob O'Brien, a best friend of his Dad and a brother of Bill O'Brien, the pool hall owner, because he was in arrears \$104.00. He did many jobs the next year to pay Bob back. Perhaps a blessing in disguise, because from then on he never had another problem in financial mistakes and above all, in being honest. There were hard times for many of the future years from this date, but when necessary, would write in advance if not able to pay at that time. This brings to mind a Mr. Morris Miller with Provident Loan Assn. at 503 Badgerow Bldg on 4th St. in Sioux City, Iowa. Mr. Miller, of course, probably made his Co. about 40% instead of the 10% loan of that day, by the time it was paid. Then he would receive a letter to borrow more money on his excellent credit. He usually needed to trade cars by this time, so after about 10 used cars, never a new one, a span of some 20 years, he got away from borrowing.



Thank God again for the education that experience teaches, he says.

J. — The reason for using so many names throughout this booklet is for reference that can be proven if it were ever wanted or needed.

K. — Bill O'Brien, a good friend, owned the pool hall and got the contest arranged for him to play best of 3 games of snooker with the man who won the State Championship 2 weeks before in Des Moines, Iowa with the pool hall packed John won the 1st & 3rd game.

L. — The rubbish route, in order to not get ahead of the main body of this writing, was given to Samuel Spotts, Jr. which eventually was taken by his brother Ralph. Ralph was married, in Nov. 1933 and had a family of 11 children. At this date of 1983, two of his son's own 3 large, over \$100,000.00 each garbage trucks, over 200 dumpsters, and haul for all of Ida Grove and 3 other towns. John doesn't know for sure, but he may have been the parent Co. of this. Ha! Ha!

M. — Concerning his 1st car, the Model "T" Ford. He walked in the pool hall one day and a man about 45 years old that was known as a blow hard by everybody, was sitting in a row of chairs with about 6 other men. His name was Jack Lahr. He weighed probably 300 lbs.. As John got in front of him he asked John how his Model "T" ran. John's answer was, "fine". Then he proceeded to question if John could make the Anspah Hill NW of town in high gear? He said "yes, he had quite often", Jack said he was out that way yesterday and nearing the top he wasn't sure for awhile if he would make it, and usually he could gain speed going up.



But then he found out why, he looked down and his emergency brake was pulled back almost on tight. John said, "Jack, I am not in the habit of calling my elders a liar, but this time I have to." Jack was almost furious. Finally wondering why John could not believe his car could do this. But when John said " Well Jack you can't get your car in high gear with the brake back". Everyone in earshot went hysterical with laughter. Jack politely got up, red faced and left.

N. — Sorry you turned back here to "N". I think I'll just let you figure out what happened the next 4 years. After I met Laurretta.

O. — In the fall of 1934 we joined up with a crew of 4 couples who were working Ida Grove, Iowa territory, selling poultry remedies. They were 1 crew of 150 crews of singles or couples and some having a child or two, who worked with the National Poultry Products Co. of Kansas City, Missouri. Mr. A.B.Wymore was the owner and lived in Juanita, Nebraska. This was our first stop after leaving Ida Grove. We stayed at his big mansion the first 2 weeks, so I could go out with one of his salesmen to learn the selling of wormer, tonic and delousing powder. He then put us with a crew of 3 other couples to Kerney, Neb.. We would work a few weeks in each place until we finished the territory. By Christmas time we had worked Glasco, Kan., Minneapolis, Kan. and on to Olathe, Kan.. We rented light house keeping rooms in a regular cabin camp here. I traded the Model "T" we came from Iowa in, for a 4 door Oakland. The point I want you to see here, is that we have a car with Kansas license now.



We came out of a grocery store the next Saturday night, and while walking up the street to our car, 3 or 4 young fellows were walking close behind us. I heard one of them ask the others if they wanted to go over to Bonner Springs roller skating. I stopped, turned and asked them where Bonner Springs was. One of them said it was 16 miles north. I told Lauretta we should drive over the next day. I had not heard the name Bonner Springs since I was probably 5 or 6 yrs. old, but right then I knew that was the name of the town in Kansas that Dad had said Aunt Nettie & Uncle Rolley lived. Lauretta knew about my suspicions of Nettie being my real Mother. We decided to play it as though I only thought she was my Aunt. The main reason being not to disrupt her family in case they didn't know about me, if she were my Mother.

So, the next day, Sunday in 1934 we went to Bonner Springs. It wasn't a very big town then, although it was only 16 miles from Kansas City. We stopped at a gas station and asked about a Rolley Culp Family. He gave us directions, saying it was right next to the Catholic Church. It wasn't hard to find, but no one was home. I went next door to the Priests house. He came to the door and I asked him if he knew the Culp family, he said, "Oh yes, they are a wonderful family, Mrs. Culp takes care of the flowers etc., in the Church". He asked me if I knew them. I said I was a relative from Iowa and hadn't seen them for 15 years. He said they will be so glad to see you. Then he proceeded to tell me they had just left before we got there.



They were walking out to the amusement park  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north and  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west. He was sure we could catch them before they got there. He described them as Nettie about 5'3"., Rolley nearly 6' and slim and their youngest son "Bill" nickname "Bozy" as 6 years old. I told Lauretta we wouldn't act like we knew who they were. Sure enough when we turned west we seen them  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile ahead on the right hand side of the road. I pulled up beside them and Lauretta rolled her window down. Remember we have Kansas license on the car, nothing to suspicion. The question I asked them could have sounded silly because I could see the top of the Ferris Wheel over the top of the trees  $\frac{1}{2}$  mi. ahead. I asked if there wasn't an amusement park out this way somewhere. With great delight to be so helpful, Rolley smiled and pointed at the Ferris Wheel over the tree tops ahead. I said "Oh, I see it, thanks", and started ahead only about 2 feet and stopped. I said "Gee, maybe you folks are going out there too". They admitted they were. I told them we had a whole empty back seat, they could just as well jump in and ride. Nettie got in, slid over then "Bozy", then Rolley. I reached up and tilted my rear view mirror down to where she was in perfect view as I started forward. I then said "Gosh, you sure look familiar, like I knew you from somewhere". I'm sure she could see me in the mirror also, from the direct look at me in the glass. She said "where are you from?" I said Iowa, and I could see a slight palor taking place on her face as she asked, "what part?". When I said, "Ida Grove", I swear her face went ashen grey.



So I quick said " You look just like my Aunt Nettie". Her color returned as she asked my name, and when I said John Derksen, her tears flowed as she said " Oh my God your Johnnie".

It probably would not have to be said that we never went into the amusement park. She loved Laretta and the feeling was mutual. We spent many weekends with them during our 5 weeks out of Olathe and 4 weeks out of our next territory at Garden City, Kansas.

This takes us into February 1935 and we quit National Poultry Products Co.. To go back to Ida Grove, because we were going to have our 2nd child within the next 2 months.

P. — [ ] was born [ ] 1935. After returning  
Q. — to Ida Grove in Feb. 1935, I worked on the formulas I now knew and got my state permits on wormer, tonic and delousing powder for chickens. I also sold the spray material, but not the actual spraying.

During the next 5 years I worked the same areas every year in 8 different states of the midwest. Sold to the same people each year and they were always well satisfied. Laretta and the children would go along most of the years except for a couple months each time she got out of the hospital. This was the routine until about the time James Franklin was born. The 1st 4 children, all girls, were born at home. Can you imagine only \$20.00 to the highest \$25.00 for the total Doctor bill for child birth? That is what it was.



We always managed to work the couple of territories around Bonner Springs for about 6 weeks each year. Many weekends with Rolley & Nettie, we all enjoyed it. Nettie loved the kids, but nothing was ever said, so she remained Aunt Nettie to us.

This took us up into 1940 when I worked a few months for some friends, Hopkins Dairy. I also took care of the poultry territories within 60 miles of Ida Grove. I also had 17 poultry houses in these areas that handled our Excell Poultry Products.

Then in the fall of 1942 we moved to Holstein Iowa. The family was getting too large for taking them along anymore and some of them in school now, so I took a job in the Council Oak Store. I was only 2 months with Norman Weiland, the manager, when a Mr. Albert Fritz asked me if I would take over as manager in a store he had in Holstein. Mr. Fritz owned and operated the "Blue Eagle" Bowling Alley. The grocery store was "The Consumers Wholesale" next door to Council Oak Store. This was a job that we would have a better income and gas rationing was going to start within a month, on Nov. 2, 1942. His store was going in arrears financially and he still had a 2 yr. lease on the building. Within 6 months I had over 1/3 of the Council Oak customers plus the ones they previously had. Yes, it was well on top of its financial come back.

By the time 1 year and 1 month came around. A couple of little tricks I did that got customers in was to fill the windows with specials with the same colors of show card



paint that Norman used on Council Oak windows next door. But the difference was making an arrow from his window to our door and printing the words "Main Entrance" in it. It looked like a large 4 window 2 door store. Nothing wrong with the sign, because we did have a back door that wasn't our main entrance. Another time I spelled "CARROTTS" on the window. We gained at least 25 customers who, after picking up their groceries, wanted to tell me that carrots was mis-spelled. The best part was that we kept most people after a 1st time in.

S. — The date was Nov. 1943. My number came up in the "Fish Bowl" drawing at Washington D.C.. Albert Fritz & Consumers Wholesale Grocers both wanted me to get a deferment, but I had always been a staunch American, so refused. I said I would go to Ida Grove the County seat to have the 1st examination. I also felt that it wasn't right to see the young men, some married, that I knew, that had been leaving the previous year. They were just starting life and I had literally had the happiness already that many never attain, even through old age. I was 30 years old, no birth certificate, but used my school records that showed June 14, 1913 as my birthdate. At the Ida Grove examination, it more or less amounted to finding out your skin was warm, you weren't dead. I went to Des Moines Iowa on Dec. 3, 1943. After the examination, I was given a choice of Navy or Marines. If I took the Marines I would have left Des Moines the next morning for Camp Pendelton, Calif..



If I took the Navy, I would go home and report back on Dec. 9th to be sworn in and sent to Boot Camp, Company 1084-43.

After Boot Camp, where they were pushing them thru in 12 weeks at this time and after 15 days leave back home, I returned to Farragut to be re-assinged. After 2 weeks back, I was assigned to the University of Idaho at Moscow, Idaho to attend Radio School. I was assigned a room with 3 other fellows, one of whom was Eldon Stanford, 12 years my junior. Eldon and I had come into boot camp the same day, so had been in the same Co. there also. He had came in from Bremerton, Washington, where his Dad was working in the shipyards. They had gone out there for this reason from Cherokee, Iowa, 18 miles north of Holstein, Iowa where I lived. We were always together and with another friend of his, Joe Merrill, from Seattle, Washington. They owned the Stanford Plumbing & Heating business in Cherokee, Iowa. Allow me to back track to Boot camp for a minute. Halfway thru we got one days liberty. I did not take it, but rather wrote my wonderful wife and seven living children an extra long letter. Larry Dean had been born on Feb. 22nd 1944, 2½ months after I came to Boot Camp. The 15 day leave after Boot Camp was the first time I seen my newest Son. After leave, and waiting for my next assignment with 5000 in a large drill hall that you put your cots up at night and took them down in the morning was monotonius and tiring for two weeks. During the day, Company's took turns drilling, getting their 21 shots, in case of maybe going to the South Pacific eventually. Also one Co. at a time being marched to the chow hall.



No other time was anyone but Officers allowed in or out of the Drill hall. There were guards at every door. One day while Stan, Joe and I were sitting up in the balcony area that was on both lengths of the hall, I asked them if they believed much in applied psychology? They wanted to know why? I told them I would bet them a dollar each that I could walk out the door, go over to ships service, buy us some candy bars and come back in. They about dislocated their fingers getting their bill-folds out. They allowed me to take the \$2.00, just in case, to get their candy bars, but were quite sure it wouldn't be needed. I put my "P" coat and hat on and without them seeing, I took a tablet, wrote their names on a page, left the tablet open with the pencil on it and proceeded to a door. As I came up closer to the guard I merely flashed the tablet with names and pencil on towards him and seemed to be in a hurry. The guard only nodded and I was out the door. I brought us each 5 candy bars back and let them pay me for theirs. So I would have their \$2.00 over. They had been watching from the balcony and wanted to know what I had on the tablet the guard glanced at. I said I had your names on it. I wasn't going to be in this alone if it didn't work. I told them if I was the guard and some Navy fellow had paper with names on, a pencil out and was in a hurry, I would certainly think he was on some assigned mission. and I was. Getting them 10 of the highest priced candy bars they had in the Navy.



Now we can go back to the University of Idaho, to continue our story.

The four of us in the room at "Sweet Hall", the nicest dormitory on the campus, would discuss many things about happenings in our lives. One evening about a month after we arrived, I mentioned that I very seldom had many dreams, but probably had 12 or 15 the past 15 years and nearly every one came true. As an example I said I dreamed a week before the Joe Louis, Johnny Paycheck fight in Madison Square Garden, that Paycheck got knocked out in the 1st round. When the fight came up it happened at 26 seconds of the 1st round. This did not necessarily make them believers so they wanted me to tell them the next dream I had. One morning, 5 am, when the guard came down the hall, blowing a whistle and yelling "Hit the deck", we swung our feet out of bed. While we were still pulling our socks on, I said I had a dream that it had snowed about 4". We had, had no snow since we arrived at Moscow, Idaho over a month before. One of the fellows went over and opened the window shade and lo and be hold there was at least 3" of snow on the window sill and still snowing. They were hard to convince. They couldn't be sure I hadn't got up during the night and knew it was snowing. I really hadn't. Another week went by and I had another dream. I related it to them when we were getting up. I told them it worried me because I seen my wife, the 7 children and other people helping them from our house into 2 cars. It was at night. That is all I remembered. They agreed this would be the real test.



We were all together in the noon chow line and they wondered if maybe I had lost my talent about dreams. With that one I said, "I hope so". But in the 5 pm chow line, all 4 of us together, a messenger came in the hall paging John Derksen. It was a telegram, it read "House damaged by fire, everyone ok, went to Ida Grove". A couple of days later a letter verified the fire was the same night I had the dream. They admitted they were convinced and would I please tell them if I had anymore dreams. I did not have anymore.

It was now into the month of May. I rented a house from the man who owned the taxi cab co. in Moscow, a Mr. Neeley. I called Lauretta and told her to come out. It now seems unbelievable, but she made it with 7 children from 3 months to 9 years old. From Holstein to Sioux City with her brother Melvin and his wife Lena. They insisted on stopping at their farm near Anthon on the way. It had rained and was freezing when they got stuck in his long driveway. They had to walk thru the mud to the house. There was no fire in the old heating stove and no dry cobbles or kindling to start one. I guess they huddled until Melvin went and got the car out. By the time they got to the train station they were all muddy. Luckily they had enough time for Lauretta and Lena to take the kids in the bath rooms to wash them and change clothes. They had to change trains in Aberdeen So. Dak., then on across the plains, the Rockies, thru Montana, the SE corner of Washington and Moscow. A three day ordeal !



They tell me this train trip was where Jimmy asked some man who was eating Braunsweiger - "Mister, can I have some of that for my guts", he gave each of the bigger kids a piece. God help me, how can a man ever repay a woman who would go thru this ordeal for her man! It must have been youth, mixed with a lot of love.

My training in Moscow finished the 1st week of July. I got a 15 day leave to go back with the family to Holstein. This made it much easier for their trip home and with warmer weather, than when they came out. I left then to not see them again for 15 months. I was sent, as was Stan and Joe, to Oceanside, CA.. We went to teletype school at "Boats Basin", directly across the road, on the ocean side from the main gate going into Camp Pendelton, the largest Marine base in the world. Here we were split up. Stan went to the New Hiberty Islands, Joe to Gwam and myself to Gamadota, New Guinea. I left San Francisco pier 8 on the 2nd day of Oct. 1944. Twenty one days to Gamadota. The only land we seen was one morning about the twentieth day. We came between two Islands, one was Guada Canal and the Coconut trees looked like tooth picks, no leaves or coconuts from the shelling. About 1 month at Gamadota and we met our contingent from Australia and headed for Hollandia, New Guennea. This was the 7th fleet head quarters. I was right with Admiral Kincade and Gen. Mac Arthur until the war ended. Next was Leyte, Phillipines Islands, then Manila, Phillipine Islands. I got discharged from the Navy on Nov.5,1945 at Minneopolis, Minn. Got home the next day. An expierence worth a million dollars, but one I wouldn't give a dime to duplicate again.



When I got home, the store I was in had closed. Albert Fritz' lease was up and he only wanted to be out from under it.

I went to work with Norman Weiland, my old competitor, for Council Oak. He liked my ways and my work. One day after Christmas he still had about 50 fruit cakes left. They hadn't sold at all well that year. He asked me what I thought would help get rid of them? Cutting the price below cost? I said, "Lets try something". I printed a sign for the regular price and on it I printed "One per customer, please". They all sold that week and you would be surprised how many friends the clerks made by letting them have 2 and sometimes

U. — 3. Eldon Stanford came back from the Navy and had a wife. Her name was Doris. She was from Seattle, Washington. Eldon's folks were back in Cherokee again and starting up the Stanford Plumbing & Heating business again. This is when I joined up with them and quit the grocery business. It is necessary, because of the getting to far ahead of the story, to go back and bring another phase of my life up to date 1950. This is when Eldon, Doris, my Dad, Lauretta and I took a trip to Kansas.

I am taking you back again to 1939, the last year I made a trip to territories with poultry remedies to Kansas. This would be the last year for 11 more years before we seen Rolley & Nettie Culp again. That year after we had been to Kansas, we were living back in  $\frac{1}{2}$  the house my Dad and Mom lived in. One day a letter came from Kansas City, Missouri. It was addressed to Mrs. Nettie Derksen. We were the only Derksen's living in Ida Grove, so the postman left it there.



Lauretta said to Dad and I when we got home that this letter came to us. Dad seemed so perturbed about it. He said " don't open it, I'll take care of it in the morning and send it to her". He went down town after dinner to play pinochle with his friends. I steamed it open. The letter was from a Fred Cupp. He said, " I hope I have finally found you. I am now 24 years old". He went on to say that he found out after searching for years that he was born in a certain hospital in Kansas City and left there. He was then put in an orphanage and adopted by the Cupp family. I resealed the letter but I'm sure Dad never sent it if he read it or not. He knew Lauretta and I and with 1-2-or 3 children as the years went by, had visited Roley & Nettie every year. But we always referred to them as Aunt & Uncle. Dad never knew I even had a suspicion of my parentage. I had an old typewriter and wrote my life's story up to then. I explained my suspicions and all the many trips we had visited with Roley & Nettie. In particular the 1st meeting going out to the amusement park. I finished by asking him not to ruin their family in case Roley or their 3 children had not known about me and now maybe also him. I told where they lived in Bonner Springs. I told him to take a can opener along and knock on their door, if Nettie was not there alone, try to sell a can opener. If she were there alone, hand her this twelve page letter. I sent it to Fred Cupp.

About 10 days later we got his answer. He said he did exactly as I asked Him. He did not have to try to sell a can opener.



He handed her my 12 page letter. She started reading it, then sat down to finish it, with tears streaming down her face. She told him we were full brothers.

We shall now go up to 1951, 11 years later. The Stanfords, Dad, Lauretta & I went to Bonner Springs. This was the 1st time in probably 35 years and the last time he got to see Roley & Nettie and his sister Zennie in Omaha on the way home. Nettie got me aside from the family and told me how sorry she was because she didn't dare tell me about us all those times we visited. She also told me she was so in love with this Fred Long, but her father wouldn't let her marry him. Also that Fred Cupp was my full brother. Eldon, Doris, Lauretta & I went into Kansas City and met my brother, his wife and 5 children that evening. He and his family came to 284 Saratoga Ave. for 3 or 4 days a few months later. Some time after that we got a letter from them from Calif. they wanted us to come out also, but he wanted us to send them \$150.00, we didn't have \$150.00 to loan. Their letter and address was lost in the flood.

Another happening after we got the letter in 1939 from my brother, Fred Cupp; on April 2nd, 1940 Mom died. She was burried on  5th birthday. April 5th, 1940. We went to a rosary at the funeral parlor that 1st night. When we got home, Dad said, " Boy, sit down I have something to tell you that may come as a terrible surprise." I said "Dad, I think I know what your going to tell me." He asked, "What?" I said, "Your going to tell me that Mom was not my real mother, and you are not my real father."



He asked, "How long have you known?" I said, "Since I was 9 years old." With tears in his eyes he said, "My God, and you never let us know." I said, "no, because you & Mom will always be Dad & Mom to me."

We shall back track again to after our trip with the Stanfords and my Dad to Kansas and Omaha Nebraska. It was perhaps 3 years later, 1953, that Mr. Wm. Stanford, Eldon's father moved back to Seattle Washington, where he died of a heart attack on Thanksgiving the same year. I must give you one story about Eldon to show how honest he was and thinking of the future. I was with him in his pickup one day, going to Storm Lake to pick up 55 gallon drums of the Gas plant dripping, imitation creosote. The plant was changing to natural gas and I bought the last 28 barrels they had at 4¢ a gallon. This was in between the few months from quitting Council Oak and going with Stanford Plumbing & Heating. This was in the spring of 1947. We lived at the Cubby farm. Eldon and Doris were awaiting the arrival of their 1st child. While riding along towards Storm Lake and discussing life and economics in general, Eldon said, "John, you could have been a millionaire if you hadn't such a large family." Then he went on to say, "Boy, I'll tell you for sure, we sure aren't going to have that many." Well, he was, like I said, honest, they only had 7 when I last seen him. We had 7 living and 2 deceased at that time.

When they left for Seattle, I got a job as appliance service man for Parker Rutherford who was the Frigidaire dealer in Cherokee.



Parker sold out to Bushlow's Implement and I went along as service & salesman both. In September 1958 Lauretta & I celebrated our 25th anniversary with an open house. Some 150 people attended. Our daughter [redacted] [redacted] also celebrated their 1st anniversary with a nice cup cake with one candle I bought to put beside our Big Cake - their wedding day was also Sept. 7th. The cup cake, well, I guess I always thought of things like this to do. Just like turning around in my seat in algebra class for Miss Block. It wasn't smart-aleckness, I was just jovial.

[redacted] our youngest, was now in school, so Lauretta wanted to get a job now. She worked in a bowling alley for 5 years, until 1963. At this time I quit Bushlow's Implement and started " John's Service Center." We had the ribbon cutting on our 30th anniversary, by the Mayor and City Council. Before we close the story in the Iowa Service end of my service work and to keep this more interesting, I will relate 2 service calls out of thousands.

The Montgomery Family at Larrabee, Iowa, 7 miles north of Cherokee. The Mrs. called that their washer was dead. The washer was in the kitchen, so when she let me in, I only looked at it for a minute and called her over to have her show me what she meant that it was dead. She turned the timer and pulled out on it and it started filling. She couldn't believe it. She said, " and you didn't do anything to fix it, did you ?" I said not much. I reached on the floor behind it and handed her a kids toy gun. It had fell in back and knocked the plug out of the receptical.



I had plugged it back in before I had her show me how it didn't work. Minimum service calls were only \$7.50 plus 10¢ per mile both ways, but I'll bet one of her kids heard about it.

The other one, a lady called while we were opening up at 7 am. She was frantic, almost incoherent. I did manage to get her name and I knew where she lived. Three minutes later I pulled up in the alley behind her house, closer to the back door which I usually used on any service calls. She was standing in the backyard. I am sure you have heard the expression " wringing their hands", this was exactly a description of her. She was nervous, could not talk too clearly when she explained, " Mr. Derksen, it's that new frigidaire refrigerator I bought from you less than a year ago. I woke up at 2 am this morning and stayed up all night. Wait until you hear it. I'm afraid it's going to blow up any minute. Frigidaire is going to have to give me a new one. Oh, you can't go in the back door, the screen door is locked and I couldn't dare go through the kitchen since 2 am. I haven't been able to make coffee or have any breakfast yet". So, as we entered the living room, there was definitely a horrible noise from the kitchen. She came as far as the dining room where she could peek into the kitchen, as I went on into the kitchen. All this time she was sure frigidaire would have to give her a new one. She wasn't about to live with this, even if I could fix it. By this time, about 2 minutes, I had touched the refrigerator, no vibration.



I opened both doors, everything fine. The refrigerator wasn't even running, but I knew the culprit that was causing the noise. At this point she asked me if I could fix the refrigerator. I said I was afraid not. I listened for another minute of her not living with it, to get it out and bring her a new one. I said I doubted Frigidaire would do this, then reached up about 4 inches above the refrigerator, lifted the electric clock and unplugged it. The noise was gone. Needless to say, she paid for the service call and bragged about how much she loved the Frigidaire refrigerator.

Now on to the next station in our lives. We sold " John's Service Center" to a Mr. John Laposky, rented our home of 18 years and on September 11th 1965, left for California. We had a Greenbrier Chevy Van, a 1957 Plymouth car and a trailer. Everything was loaded with our special furniture and keepsakes from 32 years of our married life. There were Laura, (now that we are in California) myself, [ ] [ ] and John Jr. who took his 2 week vacation from the State Capitol at Des Moines, Iowa, to drive the plymouth and trailer. We arrived at Patricia's and her husband, James J. Hanson's at San Carlos, CA on Sept. 15th 1965.

After a weeks rest, I called Davies Appliance in Redwood City, the frigidaire dealer. I worked 8 months as serviceman and was selling twice as many appliances as their floor salesman. At this time the manager Joe Biddle, asked me to take over inside sales. This I did.



Six months later I was made manager, a position I kept until my retirement in 1976. At this time I started working for Gary with his Company " Pacific Coast Mobile Home Sales Inc ". I only go in the office 2 or 3 days a week. When [ ] quit the Delta Airlines, her and Laura also took the Calif. tests and have their mobile home sales licenses also.

During the 10 or 12 transcontinental two way flights Laura and I have had to the East coast, including one to London, England and one to Rome and Florence Italy, none was as treasured in our memories as last Nov. 12, 1982 to March 8, 1983. Out of the four months, we spent a total of three weeks in Oyster Bay, Long Island, New York City, New York. The other three months and one week with James, his wife Raynette and our three grandchildren, they own the York, PA. Airport, with buildings and charter flying facilities on four other airports. This was, of course, the most exciting and fascinating profession I ever had the opportunity to have a hand in. Yes, they let me work on Charter Flight expansion. I can only hope and pray that my ideas put in practice will have the benefits for York Aero Inc., that I was so highly paid for.

[ ] and John Jr. came to Pennsylvania for the wedding of [ ]  
[ ] This was the first opportunity to attend a grandchild's wedding, that Laura and I have had. We must say, it was the largest, most gala affair and most beautiful we have ever seen.



We went back to New York with John Jr., [ ] to spend our last three days before returning to California. We were fortunate that [ ] was home from his junior college year on a break. We did not get to see our granddaughter, [ ] as she was married a year ago to [ ] an officer graduate from West Point Academy in New York, and they live in [ ] We are hoping they will be here today for our 50th anniversary.

✓ — I used to use, with a little twist, an old adage in my talks to organizations I headed over the years, such as the Knights of Columbus Lodge, The Golden Birthday Club, and The Golden State Mobile Home Owners League, Inc., Chapter 928, Area 4, the following; " Behind every successful man there is always a surprised mother-in-law ". This is usually true also, but in my case, the original adage fits; " Behind every successful man, there had to be a good woman ". How true that is of Lauretta.

In our beginning, it wasn't easy, but it was fun. We couldn't buy a new car, new house and all new furniture, but we got all the necessities as we went along, with much ingenuity, soap & water, paint, elbow grease, and sweat.

It is unbeknownst to me if any of us ever went to bed hungry. I know they never went to bed without being lined up and bathed. Lauretta seen to that, the children, until they were probably about 13, were in bed by 7:30 in winter and 8:30 in summer. Two other adages, " necessity is the mother of invention", and " It is better to give, than to receive". With as many as six paper routes at one time, the children were to give one-half their earnings at home.



Yes, Laretta was House Boss and also Bookkeeper. After paper routes, perhaps because it had become a habit, the same routine was kept, through three setting pins in a bowling alley, [ ] running the corn popper at the picture show, Patty working for the Aments and [ ] now with a paper route for a short time. No wonder they each had a good job coming up, usually in Des Moines, Laurens or somewhere away from Cherokee, the day after graduation. But they have nearly all told us, now that they are grown, that it was frustrating at that time, but admitted it turned out to be one of their greatest assets of training when they look back on it.

The few items I mentioned took place after we moved the house in from The Vollmar Farm to 284 Saratoga Ave., Cherokee, Iowa.

Through Laretta's and my own childhood and with the exception of three of the short time rental places in our first 14 years of marriage, our average living conditions were much the same as they were on the house on the Vollmar Farm. We owned and lived there almost three years before moving it into town, In 1947 to 1950. Allow me to describe. We did have one modern convenience that Laretta and I did not have early in life, electricity. With that exception, the toilet was outside about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a city block, the well with pump was  $\frac{1}{2}$  block another direction, there was no garage and we used an old style cook stove in the kitchen to heat the 6 rooms. Before we bought our 1st Frigidaire refrigerator in 1948, a rope and pail was used to lower the milk, eggs, and butter into the well for preservation.



These were many of the conditions experienced by [redacted] Patricia, [redacted] John Jr., James Franklin, Gary Lee & Larry Dean. Please do not ask [redacted] for any confirmation of these facts. He was 11½ months old when we moved the house on to a new basement in Cherokee. Here we had all the most modern conveniences of 1950. Gas furnace, self-defrost 14 cu.ft. refrigerator-freezer, automatic washer & dryer, gas range, electric frypan etc. I know Laretta loved this new way of life. In fact she did all the laundry on a wash board and used clothes-lines until we had the 7th child. That was before we got the 1st Maytag wringer washer in 1943. Yes, she had all the conveniences she wanted. She never wanted an automatic deep fat fryer or a dishwasher. She did finally breakdown and let me put a dishwasher in after the 1st six dishwashers graduated and left home. Laretta had more leisure time now, and being the wonderful wife she was, presented me with number 11 on May 2nd, 1953, [redacted] what a beautiful little girl, the only one of our children born into a world of modern luxury. No wonder she has all these plus television and a microwave oven today. It was from heredity of the times. When you are 2 years old and can climb on a chair, turn a knob on a thermostat and make the whole house warmer or colder, its hard to visualize the older folks hardships. We remember when John Jr. would hold a lantern in 2 foot of snow and blizzard so Jimmy could see to break coal up in small chunks to fit the kitchen stove. Yes, through the years, what some of us would have termed luxuries and conveniences, other see as necessities.



I wrote this last long " Incident " in our lives to show you that your Mother, your Grand-Mother and for however many more generations read these words can add "Great" in front of Grand-Mother to see that Lauretta Mae Derksen has earned the best place we may go and will hopefully make a place to meet all of you in the hereafter. I plan on getting there first.

As you probably noticed, I did not write many individual incidents of the children. The reason being that we are asking each of you to write your own, to make a "Derksen's Lives" volume of 10. Mom & mine is only one. [redacted] [redacted] and after 2 Purple Hearts from the Vietnam War is married [redacted] and have us a 9 yr. wonderful red-headed grandson [redacted]

We do want to say that the biggest & greatest happening in our lives before today, was the surprise " This is your life, John & Lauretta Derksen" put on for our 40th anniversary in 1973.

I plan on writing many more articles in the near future to add to this volume. They will cover my views on subjects such as:

Doctors, Hospitals, & Medicines

Labor Unions

The Federal Reserve System

Politicians, Lawyers & Laws

The rise & possible downfall of the American way of life, what they wanted, what they had and where they are headed.



The Bible, the greatest book ever written before and after the birth of Jesus Christ.

Foods, Dieting, & Smoking

Poronography & Sex in our forms of the media

"Old Folk Remedies" for cures

I realize I am not an accredited authority on the above subjects, but who knows that it won't amount to food for thought, that may cause a reader to think more about these subjects, that they can at least make up their minds either pro or con.

One of the subjects I will write about, that I feel I am qualified for, is selling, the reasons for becoming a salesman and all the points to know, to make you a professional in this greatest of professions.

With this I believe we will sign off for now. Laura and I are happy, quite well and glad we lived and done what we did. If we hadn't, how and where would we have lived.

May God Bless and be with Us All !



P.S.

Whether I am 70 or 72 years of age, I kept this secret of my parentage since I was 9 yrs old, from all it may have hurt, while they were alive, except for 3 people. It is now Laura's and my 50th wedding anniversary and perhaps my most appropriate time to have told it.

I can only hope and pray, that if this was not known by Bill "Bozy" Culp, his wife and son, that it will not tarnish their memories of Nettie. After all "Bozy" our Mother was a wonderful woman, over powered by a strict, dictating father, or we may have been, God only knows, a family of 4 boys and 1 girl with the last name of Long!

## THIS IS THE STORY OF MY LIFE

Lauretta May Spotts Derksen:

It was a cold winter day on January 22, 1918 when the 7th child was born to Claudia Bell & Samuel Clinton Spotts. The baby was another girl & was named Lauretta May. I was told later in years that my Aunt Ida Mae wanted my mother after her or Virginia Mae. The name Lauretta was chosen by my parents. Note how May is spelled, which I changed some years later to Mae. I have also dropped the etta from my name and prefer to be called Laura by my friends. I remember the house and town where I was born and spent the first ten years of my life. The house was on the outskirts of a little town called Battle Creek, Iowa, I remember a big old barn where Dad kept the horses and a couple of cows, and of course Mom had her chickens. The house looked small from the outside, but it had two large bedrooms, a huge living room, & large kitchen. Part of the living room was used as a bedroom, as by this time we were getting to be a large family! The kitchen had a long table with benches on both sides. I don't remember much in my early childhood, but two incidents stick with me. I must have been about 3 years old when I remembered a big box coming to our house one day. It was from my Aunt Ida Mae who lived in Sioux City, IA. All us kids gathered around watching Mom open the box. One of the first things in the box was a cute little doll with my name on it. Mom handed it to me & the first thing I knew, the other kids were grabbing to get my doll! I don't know if I meant to, or if it was just an accident, but my doll came down with a bang over the chair back. Needless to say,



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there wasn't much left of my doll! I can not remember ever having another doll.

Mom was a wonderful cook and also baked bread every day or at least every other day. My sister Ellen and I had the habit of climbing up along side Mom, waiting for her to give us a piece of dough to make our own loaf of bread. One morning we climbed up in our usual spot and was pestering Mom for our piece of dough. She must have been in a bad mood, for all of a sudden her arm swung out and Ellen and I were picking ourselves off the floor. I must have broke a blood vessel in my nose as the blood was streaming from both sides! I don't think we ever bothered Mom again unless she told us to get up on the bench!

I was five years old in Jan. and started school that fall. They used a small wood frame building that looked like a country school house for the Kindergarten class. I remember my teacher's name was Miss Jones and I had only gone to school for one week when she said to me "you are to small for this class, so you just as well stay home." She must have talked to my parents, as I did not go back until the next fall. This made me over six and a half when I started School. I liked school very much and my two favorite subjects were Arithmetic and Spelling, and I was top student in both of them!

In March 1918, just three months after I was born, the only Grandfather I had living, passed away. This was Grandfather Neal. This left Grandma Neal our only close relative living near us. I can't remember going to her house much, but I remember her coming to our house once in a while. It seems that on Easter

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Sunday I would see her coming up the path to our house. She would have a shoe box all decorated fancy, with all kinds of goodies in it for us kids. My Grandmother belonged to the Presbyterian Church and never missed a Sunday. I am quite certain she must have taken me with her, as I can remember in those early years never missing Sunday School and Church. My parents had no religion and never spoke of God to us.

On my Mother's side I knew all my Aunts and Uncles and around 30 cousins. On my fathers side I only remember a couple of Aunts and Uncles. I know that there were quite a few, as Dad came from a large family.

As the years went by and I was about 10 years old, I realized what Dad did for a living. He worked for himself as a Well-Driller. He would go out to farms and witched for water on them, and then dig a new well for the farmer. He did this most of the time with my three brothers help, or sometimes hiring outside help.

My Mother was a shy quite person and spent most of her time cooking and washing clothes to keep us kids clean. She never went much of anyplace, but back at that time, it seemed like a mile was a long way from home!

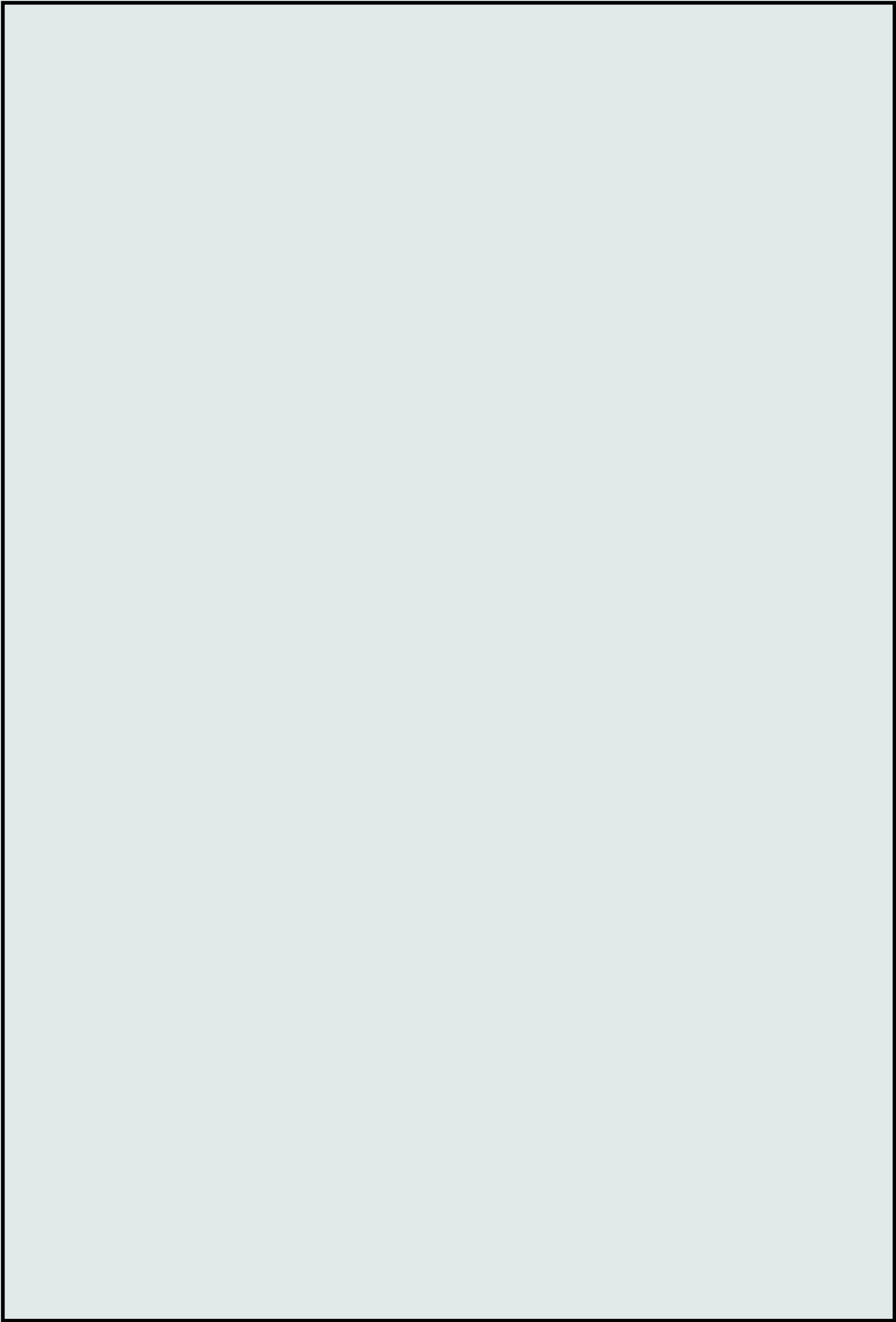
The spring of 1928 we were told we were moving to a new town thirty miles from where we lived. Dad had an old Model T truck and we watched the first load of furniture to go. It seemed like hours and hours, before they returned to load the second load! This time when it was loaded, part of us kids went along. We started down the road and I thought that trip took forever!! We



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had never been more than ten miles from home before. When we finally arrived, they unloaded the truck and started back for the last load and the rest of the family. Hours had gone by and it was getting dusk. We were getting cold and hungry. We all went to the living room window to see if they were coming yet. There was a cistern along side the house and crawling along side of it was the biggest snake I have ever seen! We all got scared and crouched in a corner until we heard the old truck pull up! The town we moved to was Dennison, Iowa. I can remember well the three houses we lived in during our two years living there. The first house was a beautiful bungalow type, had just been built and we were the first family to live in it. Here we had a furnace, electricity, and a phone. Mom worked hard getting the house straightened up, as Dad and the boys left the next day to go back to Battle Creek to carry on with his work. After that summer was over, Mom took a job in a Hotel doing laundry. Ethel also took a job in one of the other Hotels. During the next summer vacation, I would go along and help Mom until around 2:00 p.m. when she finished.

It was time to go back to school again. That year went by and we were out for summer vacation again. One day Mom said to me "Lauretta, when Dad comes home, you are going along with him and stay with Grandma this summer". She had been sick for some time and someone had to stay with her most of the time. Mom said some of the other cousins of mine stayed there, but cried to go home! Dad came home and after a few days off we went to Battle Creek to Grandma's house. I was eleven now and this was the first time I





On Sept. 7, 1933, John and I were married. This was a new experience for me as I sure didn't know much about cooking! I did know how to clean house, as that had been my job at home!

Our first baby was born Jan. 15, 1934. She passed away two weeks later. John and I spent the winter months with his parents. In the spring, we moved into our first apartment. That summer we went to visit my sister Ethel and her husband Ezra, who lived on a farm. We had an old Model T Ford at the time and the jokes John and Ezra dared us to take it for a ride. I said, "Come on Ethel, I'll drive"! I had never driven a car before, but would try anything! Ethel got in the car, I cranked it up and got it started and climbed in. Somehow we got out to the road and away we went! A couple of miles down the road I said to Ethel, "how are we going to turn around?" We saw a gate leading into an oat field, so in we went and turned around. When we pulled in the driveway, John and Ezra were a nervous wreck! They said they didn't think we would really do it! Every night after that, I would take our car and drive around. John wouldn't go along - he was scared, I guess!! Anyway, that is the way I learned to drive a car.

Now the years were sliding by and we had ten more beautiful children. Again, the ninth baby, Edward Emmett, didn't stay with us long. We pray everyday the two little ones are happy in Heaven! John and I pray everyday for good health and happiness for our nine living Children!

I lived 15 and 1/2 years with my parents, 35 years raising our family, and the past 10 years John and I living the rest of our

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lives together.

We have had some good times and some bad times, but all in all,  
we Thank God for the years we have had! God Bless each and every  
one of you, and we Love You!

Lauretta May Spotts Derksen